

Give him the name Jesus

All the gospels begin by wanting us to know that Jesus is coming:

- a) should not be a surprise
- b) but is a surprise
- John did it by locating Jesus outside of time and space – “In the beginning...” ie always existing
 - And then there is the moment he enters and becomes subject to both time and space– “became flesh and dwelt among us” but is rejected
- Matthew did it by seeing God’s plan through all the generations from Abraham through David to Jesus.
 - And then there is the conception and birth of Jesus to Joseph’s initial shock.
- Mark did it by sending the promised “Elijah” – John the Baptist – to prepare the way of the LORD ie Yahweh
 - And then Jesus is baptized – the representative of humans who is “my son”

Luke wants us to know the same thing by telling birth stories that

- a) have an old testament flavour so Jesus’ advent is continuous with what God has been doing AND
- b) tell us that this is not “same old, same old” but the completion of all things.

With the realization that **the great** is to introduce the **beyond great**.

The Announcements

It’s Gabriel that brings the message to both of them.

Response is as per usual

- Fear followed by reassurance
 - do not be afraid
 - your prayer is heard.

Gabriel is not usually the angel that brings God’s word.

He has only appeared previously in Daniel (cf message Dan 9²⁵ “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’”)

He is the messenger of the last days. He is not announcing a new step in the process of salvation. He is announcing the concluding step in salvation.

Where the message comes to Zechariah and Mary.

Zechariah is a “part time” priest. He would have worked in the temple for two weeks each year. In his lifetime he would only have the chance to serve in the room just outside of the Holy of Holies once or twice. The Angel spoke to him while he was alone in this place.

There are OT precedents (Samuel 1 Sam 3:4-14, Isaiah Isa 6:1-13)

Mary was alone and doing nothing extraordinary

The impossibility of the child’s conception

Zechariah and Elizabeth were faithful but old – well past childbearing age. Such was the situation of Elkanah & Hannah (1 Sam 1:1-2), Manoah & wife (Judges 13:2), Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:11) in the OT. The birth of a child to old parents can mean God’s intervention to do something significant.

Mary is a virgin. There is no precedent for a virgin becoming pregnant in the OT.

The child

John	Jesus
He will be great in the sight of the Lord	He will be great Jesus is “great” without qualification
He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, <i>(a Nazarite vow)</i> John is set apart for a great task.	So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Jesus is the “holy one”.
filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. John is filled with the Holy Spirit from birth	“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Jesus’ human existence is the work of the Holy Spirit.
The Spirit is a promise of the last days	
Task – • restore Israel to God (cf the servant in Isa 49:5) • he will go on before the Lord like Elisha filled with Elijah’s spirit and power. Elijah figure of Mal 3;5 unite the generations in God ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” PREPARER	Task- • give him the name Jesus • he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” SON AND KING

Response of Zechariah and Mary

Zechariah’s question: HOW CAN I BE SURE?

Zechariah wants proof that this is true, He gets it. He cannot talk.

Mary’s Question: HOW WILL THIS HAPPEN?

Mary wants to know “how” not “whether” it will happen. She accepts that it will. She is assured that God can do the impossible.

Joy

To Zechariah *He will be a joy and delight to you,* Lk 1:14

Elizabeth *he baby in my womb leaped for joy.* Lk 1:44 45

Elizabeth’s neighbours and friends *at mercy, and they shared her joy.* Lk 1:58

Shepherds *bring you good news of great joy* Lk 2:10

There is joy in the expectation and birth of any child. But this joy is the joy of God that is because he has done the expected and hoped for but in a surprising way

So What?